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ABSTRACT

Developed for two grade 8 English classes in a large metropolitan high school in British Columbia (Canada), this paper presents the procedures for implementing and evaluating a 6-week unit on lifewriting, the composing of stories based on personal experience. The Lifewriting Curriculum is provided--six lessons including activities in which students first tell and then write a rough draft of a personal story. The paper explains that this writing is guided by five heuristics: a guided listing exercise, a 5-minute forced-writing, using the 5 W's, and developing a cognitive map. The final two lessons provided include peer response and student author exercises. The paper offers student and teacher interviews as assessment of the effectiveness of the program. In addition to students' and teachers' comments, two attitude surveys, administered as pre-and post-tests, are provided measuring student gains in writing confidence and social cohesion. The paper reveals that the results of the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) indicated that while half the students remained at the same level, some students showed a dramatic dip of 20 to 30 points on the scale. The paper also concluded that the results of the Social Cohesion Test showed some movement in the desired direction but not enough difference to be statistically significant. Twelve references, A "Lesson 1" (75 minutes) Lesson Plan, and A Writing Apprehension Quiz are attached. (NH)

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ED 364 892

THE EVALUATION OF A LIFEWRITING PROJECT

Lifewriting in a Grade 8 English Class

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INTRODUCTION

This 6-week unit on lifewriting was developed in the fall of 1993 for two grade 8 English classes at Alpha Secondary School, a large metropolitan high school in British Columbia. Because lifewriting -- the composing of stories based on personal experience -- gives students easy access to the full range of processes of written composition, this unit was seen as a useful introduction to the secondary English program for students, who, having recently come from a number of different elementary schools, have had varied prior experiences in writing. Moreover, because lifewriting emphasizes the expression and sharing of personal stories, we expected that students would gain a better sense of their own identity in the classroom, and learn to appreciate the variety and differences of the other students in the classroom, many of whom come from a number of different ethnic backgrounds and speak English as a second language. The students' stories would also help the teacher to get to know their students, and, because the teachers were also expected to share their stories, the students would learn more about their teachers.

We expected, therefore, that the success of this lifewriting project would best be measured by two Likert-scale attitude tests given as pre- and post-tests. One, the test of Writing Apprehension Test (WAT), developed by Daly and Miller (1975), shows the students' level of confidence in writing. The other, the Social Cohesion Test (SCT), was developed by the researchers in a parallel format for this project in order to show to what extent the students respected and trusted other students in the class, with special reference to differences in gender and ethnicity. In addition to the quantitive data, interviews with the students and teachers, together with observation notes on the classes, provided supporting qualitive data.

Each of the classes was given a one-hour lifewriting lesson once a week for the six weeks of the project, the rest of the course time being available for other activities in the English curriculum. Generally, the two classes followed the same lifewriting curriculum throughout, with the exception that one of the classes, at the end of the project, had an extra "presentation day" when the class was visited by three members of a seniors' writing group. During this class the three visitors each presented a story to the whole class, and several student volunteers also presented their own stories. Then, the class was divided into sharing groups, with a senior participant in each group, in order that all of the students would have the opportunity to read their finished stories to an appreciative audience. Several of the students also showed their "published" books -- self-made booklets containing a computer-printed copy of their story, complete with illustrations and author's note.

One other serendipitous circumstance affected this particular class. During the time of the project a student-teacher was there to observe this class and participate in the lifewriting activities. She was able to adapt some of the lifewriting activities to use with her own classes at both the grade 8 and grade 10 levels. Some of her comments on the results of this experience are included below.

THE LIFEWRITING CURRICULUM

The first four lessons in the unit emphasized the generating of ideas, each one utilizing a different heuristic technique. The aim of each of these lessons was for the students to be able first to tell and then write the rough draft of a personal story. Every lesson used a combination of talking and writing. The students kept all of their rough drafts in their Writing Folios as "work-in-progress."

Generally, each lesson began with a review of what the students had written in the previous lesson. Some students might be prepared to read a draft to the whole class. Others would read to a trusted partner. In generating a story students would be asked to tell their story to a partner before writing it. Each lesson ended with a silent writing time when students worked on their drafts.

Lesson 1 PLACES -- Creating the settings for the stories of our lives. (Listing as a heuristic)

> "Make a list of as many places that are important to you in your life -- places where you have lived, or visited, or where you would like to go; special places - a room, or a corner, or a hiding place; places where you play or go for recreation; places in your past, your present, or your future."

Note: The complete plan for this introductory lesson is attached as Appendix A.

Lesson 2 DANGER -- Creating an exciting incident. (Forced Writing as a heuristic)

> The students were asked to think about times when their lives or safety might have been threatened. "Have you ever felt you were in danger? Were there times when you were lost? Or scared of something? Any accidents, threats, fights, bombs, fire, drowning, guns, knives, traffic, crowds? Make a list of possible incidents that might make a story worth telling.
> In a group of three, tell your partners about one of your stories.
> Drafting: Set the scene for your story. Where did it happen? What could you see and hear immediately before? Who were the people involved? How does the story end?"
> Forced Writing: "Write as much as you can about the incident in five minutes."

Reviewing: "Tell your partner more about your story. What new details can you remember?"

Lesson 3 SNAPSHOTS -- An Important Occasion (The 5 W's as a heuristic)

Students had been asked to bring a snapshot or other picture that shows something important to them.
"In a group of four, take turns to show your picture and tell your partners the context for the picture, what makes it important to you. The listeners should ask questions -- the 5 W's - What? when? where? why? who? -- to draw out more information for the story-teller."

Word Drafting: Use listing and forced writing to get ideas down on paper.
"Hold your picture in front of you while you list the objects, colours, etc. in the picture. Write as much of your story as you can in ten minutes."

Lesson 4 EXPERTS -- Expository Writing About Special Interests (The Cognitive Map as a heuristic)

What are the topics which we know best about? If you had to "teach" something to people in this class what could you teach? Something about your language, different countries, special foods or recipes, special customs, special people, your heroes, teams or clubs, hobbies, crafts, sports, games, skateboarding, jetskiing, cars or bikes, computers, books, special shows, concerts, etc.
Make a list of possible topics, choose one, tell your partner about your choice. Write your chosen topic in the centre of a blank sheet of paper. Add connecting words and phrases to make a cognitive map.
What is a good opening sentence to interest people in the topic? What information will you begin with? Number the items on the map in the order in which you will use this information. Write as much as you can about your topic.

Lesson 5 VALUING OUR STORIES (Written Peer Response Groups)

Students were asked to choose from the various draft stories in their writing folios and bring to class one clean, legible copy ready for sharing with other members of a group. First, the writing of appreciative comments was demonstrated using the overhead projector. Students were shown how to use the sentence starter: "I like . . ." They could also add a piece of advice on how to improve the story, or ask a question on anything that was not clear.

Sitting in a circle the members of a group of five or six students passed

their stories to the person on the left. Each person read the story once and then wrote a response on a separate Response Slip. After all the stories had been circulated around the group, the Response Slips were distributed to the authors, and the group was invited to discuss the value of the feedback they had received.

Students were then given time to write a revised draft, and shown several possibilities for presenting or publishing their finished stories.

Lesson 6 BECOMING AN AUTHOR (Presentation of Written Stories)

Students first wrote an "Author's Note" using the information collected in the interviews in Lesson 1.

Opportunities for publishing were discussed, including self-made individual booklets, a collaborative book to contain stories by a group of students working together, a class book containing one story from each member of the class. Stories could also be sent with a letter to an outside reader.

Criteria for preparing a story for publication were discussed, including a word-processed or typed text, proofreading, with careful attention to spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Students with computers at home (about 50% of the class) were encouraged to use them to prepare, revise, and edit text. Other students were able to use the school computer labs. Students were advised to get help from writing partners, or the teacher, in solving any textual problems.

Throughout this Unit the use of technical terms for writing was encouraged, so that the students grew accustomed to using such terms as: lifewriting, heuristics, drafting, revising, lead sentences, closers and clinchers, webbing, cognitive mapping, forced writing, free-write, work-in-progress, etc.

Students were also asked to complete an Evaluation Form (see Appendix B), listing the titles of stories completed in draft form, stories shared with other readers, and stories published, in order to be given a mark for the contents of their Writing Folio.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

The students were asked to reflect on how the lifewriting unit had affected their writing and learning processes. Three to four weeks into the lifewriting unit (approximately the half-way point), while students were working at their desks on

their lifewritng pieces, the research assistant, familiar with the unit, conducted a personal interview with each student. Students were asked to consider what effect (if any) the lifewriting unit had on their writing and learning processes. A question was put to each student in the following terms: "You have been involved in lifewriting for several weeks now. Has lifewriting made any difference to your writing or learning during this time?"

Student interview responses help to illuminate the diverse (and generally positive) student assessments of the effectiveness of the lifewriting program. The following student responses have been organized in accordance with recurring themes in the response data.

1. ESL Language and Writing Development

Approximately half of the students interviewed speak a language other than English outside of the school. Several students had difficulty responding in English to the interview question. The most common natal languages other than English were Italian, Cantonese, and Japanese.

Stanley, a Japanese speaker, felt that the lifewriting process had improved his vocabulary:

> **"I've got better words in my sentences."**

Momoko, also a Japanese speaker, expressed the view that writing about personal experience made the writing process easier:

> **"Like, when you get to write about your experiences and that...like...you have more to write about."**

For **Judy**, a Cantonese speaker, the lifewriting process helped her to think in written form, to write in details she would not normally consider when communicating verbally:

> **"You need to pay attention to all the details...because you have to write it so that everybody else knows what you know."**

Karmen, a Philippine Canadian who speaks Tagalog, felt that lifewriting permitted expression of feelings which she could not express verbally:

> **"Like you get to let out your feelings...Sometimes you can't let it out -- but you can write it on paper."**

2. Idea Generation

Several students expressed the view that the lifewriting process helped to generate more ideas and alleviate writer's block:

Lola: **"...it gets more ideas for your stories and stuff...it gives you more choices...you're not always stuck on the same things."**

Jason: **"I've found out that I have lots...I've got more ideas in my head than I thought."**

Shana found that being able to choose her own topics generated what she felt to be better ideas:

> **"I like to pick my own subject...I don't always do as good as I can if I don't pick my own subject."**

Renee expressed a similar view:

> **"It seems like if somebody doesn't tell you what to write, it's a lot easier to write stuff down."**

3. Self-Discovery

Other students found that lifewriting unlocked their memories, permitting them to discover something new about themselves:

Franco: **"Takes me back a bit.... Brings back memories from my past!"**

Lynn, a Cantonese speaker who has difficulty with English:

> **"It's kind of...reminds you of all your memories...learn more, more about yourself."**

Sandra enjoyed the sense of surprise in discovering new aspects of her 'self' as they emerged from her written work:

> **"So...you can write things down and you don't know what you're writing about."**

Jason expressed a similar idea:

> **"I guess I've seen more things about myself that I didn't see before."**

Raquel: **"You're kind of looking back on your situation and you kind of go over what happened...cause you can see maybe what you could have done different...it kind of opens up into something different...You put more thought into it!"**

4. Writing Improvement

Several students felt that the lifewriting process had improved their writing skills:

Dave: **"Since I came in, I improved my writing."**

Sandra: **"I've learned how to express my feelings on paper more."**

Many students attributed an improvement in their writing ability to the focus which the lifewriting process brought to their narratives.

Regan: **"...it's not too hard -- it's not too easy. You don't have to think about what you're writing about -- you already know what you're writing about. You don't waste a lot of time."**

Lindsay: **"My hardest problem is deciding what you're going to write about...It helps to narrow it down."**

Michaela: **"It helps me, like, figure out.... It helps me figure out my thoughts."**

Other students found that the lifewriting process focused their memories.

Bindi: **"Expressing what you've done in your life and stuff.... I can always remember the details and stuff because you're writing everything...."**

Giancarlo:

> **"It kind of helps me think about stuff I hadn't thought of before...that I wouldn't think of on a normal basis."**

5. Writing Enjoyment

For some students, the lifewriting process made writing more enjoyable or provided motivation.

Marietta: **"I don't like writing at home, cause, it's not fun...nobody to share it with...but at school I like it [lifewriting] because I have more people to share it with."**

Elton, a recent refugee from Croatia:

"This project wakes me up in different ways, so I can do my work."

Alan: **"The forced writing -- it kind of gets your brain going. It helps you think about what to write."**

Mike immediately stated:

"I hate writing!"

However, he was pleased with the progress he'd made through the lifewriting process:

"It's made me write a bit....cause I never usually write...So now I am [writing]. I feel good that I'm actually doing some writing."

6.Ownership of the Writing Process

Still other students appreciated the measure of control the lifewriting process gave them over decision-making and evaluation.

Terri: **"Because you have freedom to write! Cause...you don't have to show it if you don't want to, and people don't make remarks about it."**

Roy: **"You don't have to get it perfect the first time...I think it's a good way to learn how to write."**

Leif: **"Helpful!...um...I like the way you could get your ideas down on paper...there's not much pressure. Giving yourself a chance to look back over all your drafts and picking one that's right for you, and then making it right for others.... In the process of doing that you get a better chance of getting a good mark."**

7. Negative Responses

Several students (mainly boys) expressed dissatisfaction with, or ambivalence toward the lifewriting process. Two expressions of dissatisfaction were in connection with perceived omissions in the lifewriting process, which in fact were elements of the lifewriting process that they had remained unaware of.

Clive: **"I don't know...I'm not interested in it...if he let us look at a picture and write our own story about [it]..."**

Clive was unaware that students were asked to bring their own pictures to use as "triggers" during this lifewriting unit.

Peter: **"I don't really like writing much."**

Peter felt that using computers in the lifewriting process might help him enjoy writing more. He was not aware that using computers would be a part of the process at a later stage.

Cherie was unhappy with the segmented nature of the lifewritng process. She had not liked the idea of experimenting with various stories. Later, of course, she would be asked to elaborate one of her stories:

> **"I don't really like doing it. I'd rather have lots of time on one story rather than just, like, a little bit of time for each story."**

Brad felt that lifewriting had not helped his writing skills and had made little difference to him at this point. Significantly, in spite of his negative opinion, Brad remarked:

> **"Well, I liked all of it...but..."**

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

Both of the teachers who took part in the project were excellent teachers with a wide experience of using writing processes in their English classes. They were both very familiar with most of the writing techniques used in this project, including brainstorming, cognitive webbing, forced writing, drafting, talk-write activities, and a variety of revision strategies. Teacher A remarked on the idea of having the students write several drafts before choosing one story for revision, noting that this procedure seemed to give the students more control of the process and more commitment to their writing. Teacher B also commented on the value of letting the students write appreciative comments about each other's writing, noting that in this activity the

students, in reading a lot of other stories, got ideas for their own. Also, in having to find something positive to say about their partners' stories, they learned how to make their own stories better. Teacher A liked the once-a-week timing of the lifewriting unit because it allowed the students to continue with other aspects of the English curriculum. In contrast, Teacher B would have preferred to have an intensive unit with every lesson given to lifewriting for three weeks.

Teacher A saw the primary benefit of the lifewriting unit in terms of developing student motivation and confidence:

1. "I think it's given them confidence .... The topics were really their topics. It was things they were interested in."

2. "Writing has been a pleasant experience for them. They understood what was expected ... and the comfort level went up."

3. "I find that it really empowers the kids. They are in control of what they are producing here."

When she considered how the unit had affected individual students she commented:

4. "Roy. He has actually completed a story. So it's given him a lot of confidence.... He's done some work ... and there's a product -- one he's quite comfortable about."

5. "Mike. His attitude is much more positive. He's interested in getting on computers and getting it done. I think his attitude has come up."

Teacher B was interested in how the unit had focused the students' attention:

1. "I think the program tended to focus the kids' attention into one area .... It was developed in such a way as to give them a jumping off point in writing.... It allowed them to dig into their own personal experiences."

2. "Getting started is often the toughie. Ever since I started teaching, that has been one of the real problems that kids have in writing. [The unit helped them to] come up with the original idea -- getting an idea to go with."

He appreciated the randomized response groups for the writing of appreciative comments on each other's stories:

> **3. "A lot of them didn't even know each other.... They didn't even know each other's names.... They may have read other students' stories before, but just their buddies'."**

When asked to consider individual students he commented on Gilbert's surprising performance:

> **4. "Gilbert is extremely negative, trouble-making, disturbing -- the kid has real, serious problems. But he did really well. Of all of them Gilbert was the biggest surprise. He got a story and actually went on and wrote another draft, so he has something to say.... He's doing things!"**

Teacher B's class had enjoyed an additional lifewriting session when elder visitors from a Senior Citizens' Writing Group visited the class to share their stories with the grade 8 students. Following the seniors' presentations, the class was divided into response groups with one of the seniors participating in each group in order to give all students the opportunity to read their stories to a smaller but appreciative audience. Teacher B, reflecting on the interaction between the elders and the students, noted that this experience had validated the use of everyday personal experience as the subject for interesting stories:

> **5. "The students have this idea about action -- it's got to be Arnold Schwarzenegger and blood and guts -- it's the [media] world they live in. Suddenly, these older people in the English class ... reading their stories ... they are just about life, and suddenly it dawns on them ... that's what writers write about."**

The student teacher with this class commented on Toby, a student whom she described as a very resistant writer:

> **1. Toby's problem was writing about his own life ..., he was very closed about his home life. I gave him the option to write a creative story, and he sat down and put pen to paper and went crazy! His own life, either he didn't want to share it, or he didn't find it interesting, but he did put in the effort for the creative story.... How much of his own experience did he use in the creative story?"**

She also noted the emphasis in the unit on individual success, especially in the writing response groups which only allowed positive comments:

> **2. "I thought that was really good .... Everyone was set up for success."**

She attributed this success to the progression of activities, the alternation of writing and talking:

> **3. "They were set up the whole way so that when they wrote they actually had something to write. So that progression worked really well."**

ATTITUDE SURVEYS

In order to provide some triangulation in this evaluation, in addition to the students' and teachers' comments two attitude surveys were administered as pre- and post-tests in an attempt to measure whether the students had made any gains in their writing confidence and social cohesion.

The Writing Apprehension Test (WAT, see Appendix C) was derived from an article by Daly and Miller (1975). Although designed and tested on college level students this test has also been used in research studies of attitudes to composition in secondary schools (Donlan, 1986). The students respond on a scale of 1 to 5 to 26 statements about written composition. A median score is 78; a very low apprehension score would be 16; the maximum score for high anxiety is 130.

The results in both classes were somewhat encouraging. The pre-tests showed mean scores for the two classes were 80.96 for class A (N = 26, S.D. = 3.50, S.E. = 17.80) while for class B the pre-test mean was 74.89 (N = 21, S.D. = 2.88, S.E. = 13.81). On the WAT post-test class A scored 74.68, while class B scored 67.00, which is a difference in the expected direction -- a lowering of the students' writing apprehension -- although without a control group it is impossible to say how significant the difference may be. Only if we look at the scores of individual students can we see that while about half of each class remain at the same level, some students show a dramatic drop of twenty to thirty points on the scale.

The results of the Social Cohesion Test are more indefinite, showing some movement in the desired direction but not enough difference to be statistically significant. The pre-test mean scores for both classes was somewhat higher than the median score of 84, on a scale that ranges from 28 - 140. (SCT Pre-test: Class A - 90.1; Class B - 97.5. Post-test: Class A - 100.4; Class B 104.65) , suggesting that in neither class was social tension a problem. If it were true that these classes had already achieved a good degree of social cohesion then it would be unlikely that their scores would improve to any great extent on the post-test. An item analysis of these results may show which factors show some discrimination. Further analysis may also show whether there are any differences for the groups of items dealing with gender and ethnicity.

But of course, without a control group, it is impossible to show the real significance of the lifewriting treatment. Unfortunately, the Grade 8 class designated for this role was taken over by the student teacher who, having observed the lifewriting activities in Class A, replicated the curriculum with the other class, thus precluding its use as a control group. Another difficulty was the low number of students who actually completed both the pre- and post-tests, partly because of absences, but also because in the first few weeks of the term there were a number of transfers from one block to another in order to accommodate program changes.

CONCLUSION

This pilot study into the effects of a lifewriting unit on Grade 8 students suggests that the students benefited from the expression of their personal stories. Their experiences in using a variety of writing techniques gave them a better understanding of their writing processes, which together with the unit's emphasis on success, helped them to gain confidence in their ability to write. The quantitive evidence supports the subjective data in the favourable responses gained from the students and teachers, and the observational notes on classes in action by the research assistant. On the whole the students were committed to the process. Their behaviour, especially in such student-centred activities as peer response groups and writing conferences with their partners, showed they were capable of keeping on task in these self-directed activities. Students were also observed to be individually committed to their stories during the writing episodes.

Perhaps the success of the project is best illustrated by its effects on the more marginalized students -- those who had not before shown much willingness to participate in writing activities. The fact that some of the resistant writers actually were able to complete the project is significant. The same spirit of success is also evident in the achievement of some of the ESL students with considerable language difficulties who nevertheless reported that they were able to compose worthwhile stories, as shown also in the published books which are on display in the classroom. Some of these students showed striking gains in their scores on the Writing Apprehension Test suggesting that over the six weeks of the project they had become more confident of their powers of written expression.

The students' experiences with several heuristic techniques will also be beneficial when they tackle other writing tasks in the future. The lifewriting unit demonstrates the value of using a range of writing processes, from idea generation to publication, from process to products. In this way the unit provides a model of success that can be replicated for other writing projects.

The most significant of the students' comments were those that related to self

discovery, when students reported that they had found out more about themselves, as Jason said, "[You] learn more, more about yourself." Even more remarkable is Raquel's discovery: "You can see maybe what you could have done different." The evidence here is that these students were using the processes of recall and reflection. Lifewriting is essentially an active re-creation of experience, bringing events from the memory into the forefront of consciousness as the subject of narrative composition. The achievement of the unit can be measured, therefore, to the extent that the students learned and used a variety of writing processes to express their sense of selfhood, to create stories of value to themselves, and to communicate their ideas to various audiences and readerships in the classroom.

As this is a report about lifewriting we think it is appropriate to conclude with our favourite story of an incident that was observed in one of the classes. "Johnny" is one of the reluctant ESL writers who sat in the back corner of the class, never trying to contribute to any of the class discussions -- in fact, most of the time he seemed to be slumping low over his desk, making himself as inconspicuous as possible. During the second lesson he wrote the draft of a story which he shared with the researcher. It was a story about finding a puppy on the street and taking the dog home with him. But he was afraid that his mother would be angry, so he hid the dog in his closet. The next day he took the dog for a walk, but the dog ran away and he didn't see it again. When he was asked for some details about the dog with the aim of helping him to elaborate his story, Johnny explained that it wasn't a real dog. No, he had made up the story of the dog, because he wanted a friend, and this dog would be his friend. The story, in this light, becomes much more significant as the means by which the writer expresses an emotional need.

As Bishop Mahoney said at a teachers' conference (1983): "Human beings live to express themselves." Lifewriting enabled Johnny to do this. But Mahoney added: "You only become conscious of your own value when people listen to you." In Johnny's case this happened during the extra class when the senior citizens shared their stories with the class. One of the student volunteers brave enough to present their stories to the whole class was "Bobby," an ESL student who sat at the back next to Johnny and who spoke English with considerable difficulty. He stood up and read a story. But it was not his story, it was Johnny's story of his imaginary puppy which he obviously wanted the class to hear. Johnny's face glowed in the class's applause. His story was published in the class book with the title: "My Best Friend."

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APPENDIX A

THE ALPHA GRADE 8 LIFEWRITING PROJECT

Lesson 1 (75 minutes) "Places" Creating the settings for our stories.

1. Writing Apprehension Quiz (5 minutes)

2. An Introduction to Lifewriting: (5 minutes)

   Experiments in writing about ourselves, our opinions, our experiences, our hopes, our fears. The stories we tell to our friends about life as we live it. Ideas which are important to us and to others.

3. Interview your partner: (5 minutes for each)

   Find out five things about your partner that you didn't know before. List these five items on a piece of paper. Circle the item which makes your partner seem a special person.

4. The Word Cache: (10 minutes)

   If you can see it, you can name it; if you can say it, you can write it. In two minutes make a list of everything you can see in this room. Discuss: how does your list differ from your partner's. Who has the longest list? Who has named things which no one else has? Listing is a heuristic technique to enable us to collect our ideas about a topic.

6. The Sense of Place: (30 minutes)

   a. List the places that are important to you, places where you have lived, played, worked. A place can be a town, or a house, or a cabin, or a room, or simply a very special location in the natural world. Places in your past, the present, or the future.
   b. Choose one of those places that you think will be interesting to tell about.
   c. Share your place with your partner. Tell your partner what makes this a special place for you.
   d. List the things you can see in your place, objects, colours, shapes. List the sounds you can hear, the textures you can feel, the smells or tastes you remember. What

animals or birds are present in your scene? Who are the people in this place? What season of the year is it? What moods or feelings do you connect with this place?

7. Forced Writing:

   Write as much as you can about your place in the next five minutes, include words or ideas from your lists, to provide the details that would make a reader share your experience.

8. Telling Writing:

   Tell your partner about what you have written, what makes your place important to you, and any new ideas that have just occurred to you.

9. Conclusion:

   Keep the draft of your "Sense of Place" in your writing folder as work in progress. You may wish to add more to your story later. We will be doing more stories from different beginnings, and eventually you will be able to choose one of your stories for sharing, revision, and publication in our class book or in your own booklet.

APPENDIX B

WRITING APPREHENSION QUIZ

Directions: Below are a series of statements about writing. Decide how much you think each statement applies to you, and then circle the appropriate number alongside. These numbers indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

Circle only one number for each statement. Some of the statements may seem repetitious. Ignore this and answer each statement separately. Please try to be as honest as possible. Obviously, there are no right or wrong answers to these statements, only your opinions. Thank you.

Scale: The numbers correspond to the following opinions:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Statements about Writing

1. I avoid writing	1 2 3 4 5
2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I look forward to writing down my ideas.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated	1 2 3 4 5
5. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Handing in a composition makes me feel good.	1 2 3 4 5
7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.	1 2 3 4 5
9. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.	1 2 3 4 5
10. I like to write my ideas down.	1 2 3 4 5
11. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing.	1 2 3 4 5
12. I like to have my friends read what I have written.	1 2 3 4 5
13. I'm nervous about writing.	1 2 3 4 5
14. People seem to enjoy what I write.	1 2 3 4 5
15. I enjoy writing.	1 2 3 4 5
16. I never seem to be able to write my ideas clearly.	1 2 3 4 5
17. Writing is a lot of fun.	1 2 3 4 5
18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them.	1 2 3 4 5
19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.	1 2 3 4 5
20. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience.	1 2 3 4 5
21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course.	1 2 3 4 5
22. When I hand in a composition I know I'm going to do poorly.	1 2 3 4 5
23. It's easy for me to write good compositions.	1 2 3 4 5
24. I don't think I write as well as most other people.	1 2 3 4 5
25. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated.	1 2 3 4 5
26. I'm no good at writing.	1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX C

Lifewriting Evaluation : Student's Name: .....

Student #.....

THE ALPHA GRADE 8 LIFEWRITING PROJECT

Please Note:

There are many ways to evaluate writing. Professional authors may take into account the number of copies of a book that are sold, or how many times a book is reprinted, re-published in a new edition, or translated into other languages. It is also valuable for an author to sell the film rights to a story, or achieve fame through appearances on talk shows. Generally, the professional author needs to make money, so that one method of evaluation is to count how much money the author makes through writing.

In school, however, we depend on feedback from our readers -- other students, the teacher, friends, or members of the family. Their responses can make us feel that our ideas are valuable and worth putting into print. We also need marks or grades to recognize our achievement.

In this Lifewriting Project we wish to recognize the value of the stories we have drafted for ourselves, the stories that we share with members of the group or the whole class, and stories which are published in individual, group, or class books. Therefore, students will evaluate their own stories according to the following scale:

First, or rough, drafts of a story ..... 1 point each
Stories read or shared with a group ..... 3 points each
Published stories in a polished format ....5 points each
The Author's Note .....2 points.
(To a maximum of 20 points for the Unit)

Please list on the back of this sheet the titles of your stories in each of the above categories. Remember to save all of your drafts and finished copies in your Writing Folio.